



MOMENTS  
WITH YOU



## FAMILY

*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him;  
male and female He created them.*

GENESIS 1:27

I believe there is nothing more powerful on Earth than family. It is the single most influential force for good (or for evil) in all human existence.

From birth, it marks you. Your family crafts your conscience and shapes your soul. At home you learn life's lessons and begin the art of practicing them. At home you learn to love and to do what's right. More than merely giving you a street address, your home and family imprint you with a spiritual and sexual identity shaped by the two people who gave you life. Truly, nothing compares to the strength of being tightly wrapped in the protective fiber of family. It's who you are. It's where you belong.

And if all goes well—as it should—it is your family that surrounds you when you start life's journey, when you face life's hardest trials, when you go through the valleys and when you die. More than anyone else, the members of your family are the ones who are there for you, caring for you and mourning the loss of you when you're gone.

This should come as no surprise, because God created the family. At the very dawn of time, "God created man in His own image, . . . male and female He created them." Of all the ways He could have chosen to inaugurate His creation, He chose to start with family. In fact, the Bible begins with a marriage in Genesis and ends with a marriage in Revelation. Marriage and family have always been central to what God is doing on planet Earth.

I believe family is still of utmost importance to our heavenly Father. It holds the key to our health, our success as a society, and our future. And I believe it is worth whatever effort is required to nurture, encourage and support it.

Why not celebrate the family God has given you today?

### DISCUSS

In what ways past and present has God blessed your life through your family?

### PRAY

Thank God for the gift of your family, regardless of its inadequacies and failures.



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## I NEED YOU

*The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you."*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21

I still remember the first time I told my mom and dad, "I love you." Being a typically ungrateful, unexpressive teenager, I found looking my parents in the eye and saying those three little words excruciating.

I also remember the first time I told Barbara I loved her. My heart was jumping wildly. Adrenaline was the only thing flowing faster than the beads of sweat on my forehead. I wasn't sure either one of us would survive the experience!

Those are hard words to say to someone for the first time, aren't they? Telling another person "I love you" represents risk and vulnerability. Yet there are three other words that are often even harder to express: "I need you."

*"I need you."*

Oh, at one time they flowed fairly easily from your lips. Think back to those early days of romance and intrigue. She made you laugh. He made you feel secure and stable. She brought warmth into a room. His sensitivity made you feel valued and important.

Yes, saying "I need you" came effortlessly at first. But sometime after your wedding day, the thief of familiarity can steal that sense of need. You go your own way. You think you know best. You figure you can do fine by yourself.

Isn't it interesting that in Genesis 2:18-25, Adam had to be *told* he had a need? God said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (verse 18). And even after that authoritative statement, Adam still had to name a few million creatures before he realized that none of them were what he needed. His need was for *someone*. He needed *her*.

Don't wait to be told what you already know to be true. You need her. You need him. Say it frequently and specifically.

### DISCUSS

What keeps you from easily and openly admitting how much you need your spouse? Turn to your spouse and say, "I need you." Then share why and how you need him or her.

### PRAY

Ask God to give you a true perspective on your own limitations—your own dependence on Him and on each other.



## NEED BY EXAMPLE

*Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.*

ECCLESIASTES 4:9

I shared with you yesterday about three little words that aren't always so easy to say: "I need you." But sometimes, all it takes to get those words flowing again is just a reminder of how many ways you truly do depend upon each other.

You need your spouse for:

- *Honesty*—Who else knows you so well and can give you such an honest perspective on things when you need it most?
- *Variety*—How black-and-white and one-dimensional would your life be without someone to add color and texture to it?
- *Encouragement*—Who still believes in you when others don't—including yourself? Who helps you remember your uniqueness and significance?
- *Togetherness*—Who else can multiply your joys, divide your sorrows and add to your experience with God by sharing it together?
- *Counterbalance*—When you're going too fast, who helps you put on the brakes? When you're afraid to take a risk, who encourages you to go for it?
- *Understanding*—When you don't want to talk, who can draw you out? Who else can force you to be real and authentic with your emotions?
- *Parenting*—How could you raise your children without someone to temper your weaknesses, complement your blind spots and help reinforce your positions?
- *Romance*—Who else can share your most intimate secrets, see you at your most vulnerable, yet allow you to express yourself without shame, with pure joy in return?
- *Companionship*—Who is the difference between doing things single-handedly and doing them together, as a couple?

You really do need each other. And God knew what He was doing when He gave you to one another.

### DISCUSS

Make your own list of the ways you need each other, or prioritize the top five from the list above. Then be sure to share your list with each other.

### PRAY

Thank God for giving you someone to experience life with—someone you need probably more than you know.



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## TAMING THE DRAGON

*Therefore encourage one another and build up one another,  
just as you also are doing.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

It can lie. It can gossip. It can slander. It can also murmur and complain. It can manipulate and flatter. It can tear down. It can paint itself in nice words, even while cutting someone to ribbons.

My friend Joe Stowell calls it “the dragon in our dentures.” Our tongue. It can truly be deadly.

On the other hand, when that “dragon” is under the power of the Holy Spirit, when we are daily training it to be submitted to Christ’s control and available for His use and purposes, He can transform it into an instrument that delivers encouragement.

I remember being in church one Sunday morning when I spotted a prominent local oncologist walking by. I’d been hearing about some special things he’d been doing with his cancer patients—some unique ways he was allowing God to minister through him in the course of practicing his profession. So I caught his attention and said, “Hey, I just wanted you to know I really appreciate what you’re doing. Do you realize what an incredible minister for Christ you are? You’re making quite a difference in our community.”

It was like I’d hit him with a stun gun. A dazed expression flashed across his face. And after a moment’s pause, he looked at me and said, “Really?”

I said, almost laughing now, “Well, yeah. The things I’ve been hearing about the work you do are really inspiring. We could use a lot more Christ followers like you.”

He shook my hand and smiled. “You don’t know how much I needed to hear that this morning. Thank you.”

I was reminded again how often people just need a nod of encouragement in their journey, no matter how confident he or she may appear to be.

Shared a good word with someone lately?

### DISCUSS

Think about some things you’ve been noticing in others that are really worth praising. Slay the dragon and encourage them.

### PRAY

Ask God to make you and your words build up, not tear down.



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## STOP AND LISTEN

*Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.*

JAMES 1:19

A group of carpenters building an icehouse in the north country of Canada was taking a lunch break when a boy came upon them and heard their conversation. One was bemoaning a watch he had lost at some point in the morning's work. Though he'd looked for it for a couple of hours, he hadn't been able to find it.

"Would you mind if I went into the ice house and looked?" the boy asked. "Yeah, sure," the men laughed, certain he'd never find anything in a dark room with no electricity. Within 30 seconds, the boy emerged holding the watch in his hand. The carpenters couldn't believe it! "How did you find it?"

"It was simple," the boy said. "I just stopped in the middle of the room, stood still and listened for ticking."

Many of us (especially us men) are rightly accused of not listening very well. We rarely stop and take time to focus our attention—to really hear—what our spouse is trying to tell us. Instead, we quickly say things like, "That's dumb, honey. You shouldn't feel that way. You're blowing this all out of proportion." Those are statements that come from not really seeking to listen and understand where our wife or husband is coming from.

During serious conversations or conflicts, you need to stop and listen, ask questions or paraphrase what your spouse is saying in order to understand what he or she really means. Asking a good question can often be like an emotional crowbar to dislodge how somebody really feels.

Listening is another way of saying, "You're important to me, and I love you."

### DISCUSS

The person who says, "You're not listening to me," is usually right. How often are these words spoken between you? What is one habit you can change to become a better listener?

### PRAY

Thank God for always being there to listen to us, no matter how illogical or reactionary we may sometimes be. Ask for His counsel in how to be more like Him. And pray for yourself that you will be a better listener to your partner.

